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ABSTRACT

Social causes such as "improved nutritional practices" could benefit from marketing-like thinking. The improvement of nutritional practices, like other social concerns such as pollution control, drug abuse, and physical fitness, needs innovative solutions and approaches for gaining public attention and support. Marketing persons, by their training, are finely attuned to market needs, product of package development, pricing or channel issues, and promotional techniques--all of which are critical in the social area. Much of this knowledge can be adapted by the planners and implementers of social causes. A social marketing approach does not guarantee that the social objectives will be achieved or that the costs will be acceptable. Yet, for programs like "improved nutritional practices," social marketing appears to offer a useful framework for effective social planning at a time when social issues have become more relevant and critical. (KC)

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Social Marketing: Its Role in the Delivery of Nutrition Education Programs

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Social Marketing: Its Role in the Delivery of

Nutrition Education Programs

In 1952, G.D. Wiebe, a marketing academic, asked "why can't you sell brotherhood like soap?" (p. 679) This question suggests that the sellers of products such as soap are generally effective and that the sellers of other commodities such as services, social causes, political personalities and organizations might benefit marketing-like thinking. To some observers, the marketing of commodities other than physical products smacks of "1984" mass manipulation. However, when Wiebe (1952) examined four social campaigns to determine what conditions or characteristics accounted for their relative success, he found that the more frequently a social cause campaign resembled a product campaign, the more frequently the campaign was successful in achieving its goals. However, Wiebe (1952) also noted, that many social campaigns are conducted under unmarket-like circumstances and that there are clear limitations in the practice of marketing of such social causes.

It is from this perspective that the author will attempt to delineate those concepts and tools of the product/service marketing process which show promise as a framework for the marketing of a social cause such as "improved nutritional practices". To accomplish this task, first traditional and nontraditional views of marketing will be examined; second, the social marketing process will be described; third, marketing concepts and tools will be described and applied to the marketing of a social cause like "improved nutritional practices"; and, fourth, the limitations of social marketing will be identified.

The Marketing Process: A Traditional View

Until recently, the term marketing referred to a function peculiar to profit-oriented business firms. Marketing was seen as the task of profitably finding and stimulating buyers to consume the firm's products and services (Kotler and Levy, 1969). It was described as activities involving product or service development, pricing, distribution and communication; and, in the more progressive firms, continuous attention (market research and adaptation) to the changing needs of customers and the marketing environment (Kotler and McDougal, 1983).

Similarly, products and services were defined an a very limited way. On the one hand, products have been described as objects with tangible attributes such as color or shape. On the other hand, services were presented as commodities with non-tangible benefits. In addition to these limited definitions of products and services, marketing activities have been viewed as the exclusive domain of profit-oriented business institutions, that is, those organizations whose stated objectives include the realization of profit rather than social goals.

The Marketing Process: a Nontraditional Perspective

The first step away from a traditional view towards a nontraditional perspective of marketing requires a broader definition of organizational goals and activities. For example, one may consider organizations which have economic goals (profit) as one of their main objectives as practicing traditional marketing and organizations that have political or the larger social needs of society as their goal as practicing nontraditional marketing.

The work of Levey and Kotler (1969); Fox and Kotler (1980); and Weinberg (1984) lend support for the broad definition of organizational

goals and activities. They conclude that as one examines organizations (business and nonbusiness), it is apparent that all organizations have either political, social or economic goals and target groups or clients they must satisfy. Furthermore, all organizations have limited resources and are subject to the cultural, technological, legal, political, social economic and competitive environment.

To reach their goals, just survive or make a profit, business organizations have also realized that they need to develop some cost of a plan and carry out certain functions which will allow them to meet their goals.

Similarly, nonbusiness organizations need to have a plan and carry out functions in such a way that they meet their goals. Upon close examination, it appears that many of the same functions are carried out by both business and nonbusiness organizations. For example, both types of organization need to raise, manage and budget money according to sound business principles, perform a production function, hire, train and supervise personnel and purchase inputs and ouptputs. Whether or not they are recognized as such, the marketing or marketing-like activities carried out by these different organizations are not vastly different, and one may use these differences to clarify which of the marketing concepts and tools used by business organizations are appropriate for use by a nonbusiness organization. (Lazer, 1967; Kotler, 1982).

The second step away from a traditional view towards a nontraditional perspective of marketing encompasses a view which includes both tangible and intangible products or services as marketable entities. Consequently, if one accepts this broader view of a product, then political ideologies, persons and social goals such as the improved

nutritional status" of a particular group of clients is not necessarily incompatible with the product concept. Moreover, it then becomes possible to market political ideologies, persons and social ideas, causes and behaviors like other products and services. Furthermore, it enables one to envision marketing as a desirable activity for both business and nonbusiness organizations.

Social Marketing

Consequently, nontraditional marketing covers a neither broad spectrum. As this paper deals with the marketing of "improved nutritional practices", the discussion will now examine social marketing as one type of nontraditional marketing.

Social marketing, as defined by Kotler and Zaltman (1971), is "the design, implementation, and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and product planning, pricing, communication, distribution and marketing research." (p. 3) Fox and Kotler (1980) report that these kinds of social marketing techniques have been applied to family planning, energy conservation, prevention and drug abuse as well causes like improved nutrition.

Further, they (1980) suggest that "one can best understand social marketing by seeing it in relationship to the major broad approaches to producing social change - the legal, technological, economic and informational approaches" (p. 25).

In the case of "improved nutritional practices", the legal approach would be to pass laws that make the selling of low nutrition foods illegal, costly or difficult. The technological approach would be to develop "junk" food high in nutritional value or to reduce the harm (ie excess calories) in "junk" foods. The economic approach would raise the

insurance rates for people whose nutritional status is poor (ie excessly obese people). Finally, the informational approach would be to direct persuasive information at the general public or specific target groups known to have poor nutritional practices (ie "this product is high in calories and contains no other nutrients")

The roots for social marketing lie in the informational approach to changing behavior. Fox and Kotler (1981) noted that this approach corresponds to social advertising or social communication. They further suggest that when "(p)roperly designed, these campaigns can influence attitudes and behaviors" (Fox and Kotler, 1981, p. 25). However, they also suggest that social advertising can have only limited results.

> First, the message may be inadequately researched. For example, media campaigns to encourage people ... to improve their diets miss the point that many people lack the knowledge of which foods are more healthful. Second, many people screen out the message through selective perception, distortion or forgetting. ...Third many people do not know what to do after their exposure to the message (Fox and Kotler, 1980 p. 25)

Consequently, it appears obvious that social advertising by itself produces limited results when applied to the production of social change. "Recently social marketing began to replace social communication as a larger paradigm for effecting social change" (Fox and Kotler, 1980, p. 25).

Marketing Concept and Tools

The larger paradigm approach suggests that social marketers also need to consider other marketing concepts (besides social advertising) and tools in the production of a campaign aimed at inducing a social behavior like "improved nutritional practics." These concepts and tools include marketing segmentation, product development, pricing, distribution and marketing research.

Marketing Segmentation

As a starting point target markets have to be defined carefully. Very few businesses who define their target market in vague terms such as the general public are successful. Sepcific segments such as "females or adolescents between the ages of 16-17 still attending school", have to be identified and addressed. Much information is already available nutrition education program planners regarding such marketing dimensions the location, age, sex and the education of various groups in society. Nutrition programs aimed at a particular segment will have a much greater chance of reaching their target groups.

Product Development

In business or traditional marketing, sellers study the needs and wants of target buyers and attempt to design products and services that meet their desires. If products satisfy consumer needs and wants and are affordable, they will be purchased. In social marketing, sellers also have to study the target audiences and design appropriate products. Furthermore, they must package a social idea like "improved nutritional practices" in a manner their target groups will find desirable and are willing to accept.

Product design is typically more challenging in the social area than it is in the business area. For example, in the problem of marketing "improved nutrition practices" the social objective (goal) may be to ensure at least 90% of all Canadian grade school children know and meet their nutritional requirements as outlined by Canada's Food Guide. Because this objective includes a knowledge, an attitude, a behavioral and a resource component, it is unlikely that one product (one nutrition education program) will be appropriate. Various products or packages of

nutrition information will have to be designed to meet the needs of clients and achieve the desired social goal.

It is even possible that some packages will have to be somewhat disguised to be acceptable to some target groups. For example, one may be more successful selling beauty or style than improved nutrition to some target groups. This is often how "the package" or "the product" for commodities like cosmetics are sold. In fact, it is a common saying in marketing that one sells "the sizzle not the steak"! This approach may be distasteful to some educators. However, if a marketing approach is used, the social marketer must: (1) define the change sought: (2) meaningfully segment target markets; and (3) design social products or packages (nutrition education program for each target group which are "buyable" and which instrumentally meet an overall social goal like improved nutritional status for Canadian grade school children).

Place of Distribution

Place, a concept used in traditional marketing calls for providing adequate and compatible distribution and response channels. When applied to the marketing of improved nutritional practices it means that motivated persons should know where to get nutritional information and how the necessary nutritious foods. The poor results of many social campaigns can be attributed in part to their failure to suggest clear action outlets for those motivated to acquire the information or product. Thus, "place" means arranging for accessible outlets which permit the translation of motivations into actions (facilitation). Planning in this area entails selecting or developing appropriate outlets, deciding on their number, average size and locations, and giving them proper backup to perform their part of the job.

Price

Price represents another marketing concept that must be considered in the marketing of "improved nutritional practices". Price represents the costs that the buyer must accept to obtain the product. Price includes money costs, opportunity cost and psychic costs. Thus, the costs to persons asked to change their eating habits might be perceived by consumers as a requirement for more financial resources, a greater expenditure of energy on food preparation and the giving-up of low nutrition-but-liked "junk" foods.

The marketing person's approach to the pricing of a social product like "improved nutritional practices" is based on the assumption that members of a target audience perform a cost-benefit analysis when considering the investment of money, time or energy in the issue. Consumers somehow process the major benefits and compare them with the major costs, and the strength of their motivation to act is directly related to the magnitude of the excess benefit. This type of conceptualization of behaviour is found not only in the economist's model of the economic man, but also in behavioristic theory with its emphasis on rewards and costs, and in management theory with its emphasis on incentives and constraints.

Consequently, the social marketers approach to selling a product like "improved nutritional practices" is to consider how the rewards for accepting the product or package can be increased relative to the costs; or the cost reduced relative to the rewards, or trying to find a mix or product, promotion, place and price that will simultaneously increase rewards and reduce costs. Fox and Kotler (1981) suggest the use of gifts or prizes to improve the benefits received by the target group. Whatever

incentive is used, it is evident that careful thought must be given to the manner in which manageable, desirable, gratifying an convenient solutions to a perceived need or problem are presented to potential customers.

Promotion

Promotion performs the communication function in marketing. It is the communication-persuasion strategy (or information and or social advertising approach) and tactics that will make the product familiar, acceptable, and even desirable to the audience (Fox and Kotler, 1980). The social marketer or nutrition campaign strategist will tend to think of this as mass communication, but promotion is actually a much larger idea. Promotion also includes advertising, personal selling, publicity and sales promotion. Each of these promotional tools involves complex issues in strategy and tactics.

When using advertising to promote "improved nutritional practices" the social marketer has to identify message objectives, determine the size of the total advertising budget, choose an appropriate appeal (rational, emotional, moral), develop attention getting copy, select effective and efficient media, schedule the advertisments and measure the results.

Personal selling in a nutritional education campaign usually will be carried out by change agents (public health nurses, nutritionists). For these persons, the social marketer must determine message presentation strategies the number of change agents needed and identify how the change agents will be motivated, supervised and evaluated.

Finally, publicizing a nutrition program involves arranging for significant news about the product to appear in the various media.

Publicity may be combined with sales promotion which calls for developing special displays, premiums, programs, and events that might be useful in stimulating consumer or client interest or action.

Marketing Research

In the social marketing process, after the social goals and target market has been clearly identified, the "four P's" (product, promotion, place and price) of marketing are integrated into a social marketing strategy which is implemented and controlled by the change agency.

The implementation of a social marketing strategy designed to improve nutritional practices of a specific target group could include the following activities:

1) the development of foods that are attractive to the target group yet high in nutritional value,

2) the distribution of foods high in nutritional value in acceptable outlets (restaurants would need high volume and margins to induce them to serve such foods),

3) the pricing of nutritional foods so that they are accessible to the target groups and the use of incentives to increase the benefits of the food relative to the costs

4) the promotion of "good nutritional practices" as the "in thing" "smart thing" or "right thing" to do through advertising, and opinion leaders.

The control of a social marketing strategy depends upon marketing research. The information gathered through marketing research is used to monitor the needs of the clients and to continually adjust the programs to meet their needs. It is also used to identify new market

opportunities. The marketing research aspect includes the collection of information relating to changes in the economic, political, technological, cultural and competitive environment which affect its social marketing policies and objectives.

All of these marketing activities are specializations in which the experts have achieved sophisticated levels of knowledge and techniques. This is especially apparent when one examines social campaigns developed by amateurs in which the strategies seem very naive.

Some nutrition education campaign planners may be critical of using this approach to gain acceptance of worthwhile social causes. However, prior to rejecting it, two issues should be considered. The first issue is that this approach need not be identified as the "hard sell" approach to social objectives. Many persons mistakenly assume that marketing means hard selling. This is only a particular style of mass advertising or personal selling and it has its critics both inside and outside the profession. There are many firms that market their products with taste and sensitivity. It is important to recognize that this is <u>not</u> marketing, but rather one style of dealing with the promotion variable of marketing. Correctly or incorrectly, it frequently is used in the belief of its greater effectiveness in accomplishing the goals of the organization.

Second, the issue may not be that a particular approach suits one's personal taste, but rather whether it works. If a "hard" mass selling promotion campaign brings about better levels of nutrition in Canadian school children that a "soft" marketing style, it must be respected by those who think results are more important than personal aesthetics.

The Limitations of the Social Marketing Process

As with all new disciplines social marketing has its limitations. One of the most obvious limitations is that not all business organizations accept a nonprofit objective or social goal for marketing efforts. Social marketing suggests that marketing decisions cannot be justified on economic costs and profits alone. It indicates that some products and services should be marketed where there is little or no economic profit. And, it holds that marketing has dimensions that extend beyond the profit motive. It maintains that management know-how can be applied to the solution of society's problem. This is not a difficult concept to sell to nonprofit and government agencies interested in marketing programs such as nutrition education. However, most businesses in the food service industry are profit-oriented organizations. It is difficult to convince them that they are also responsible for providing nutrition information as well as nutritious food. Indeed they are reluctant to cut their high profit margin, large volume, low nutrition foods like french fries and high calorie dessert novelties from their menus.

Fox and Kotler (1980) identified a second limitation of social marketing which relates to target group identification and choice. They suggest that social marketers have less secondary data and more difficulty collecting primary data on their target group. Furthermore, they are often subject to public pressure to reach the whole market rather than specific segments.

"Formulating product strategy is more difficult" in social marketing (Fox and Kotler, 1980, p. 31). Many people do not perceive foods high in nutritional value as attractive and as tasty, convenient or popular as "junk food".

Pricing also poses a problem for social marketers. Often the behavior (ie controlling the quantity or quality of food intake) desired by the social marketer is unpleasant and this represents a higher cost to the consumer than other more pleasant behaviors such as overeating.

Another lmitation of social marketing relates to the promotion or communication area of the "4 P's". Specifically, for the promotion (advertising, personal selling) portion of marketing to be effective three conditions appear necessary.

The first condition is real or psychological monopolization by the media; that is, a condition market by the absence of counter propaganda. As this condition is usually found only in totalitarian states or during wartime, in fact, it rarely is met during most advertising campaigns whether profit or nonprofit.

The second condition required for effective mass communication is canalization. This is the presence of an existing additudinal base for the behavior that the communications of social causes like "good nutritition" are trying to shape. Typical commercial advertising is effective because the task is not one of instilling basic new attitudes or creating sigificant new behaviour patterns, but rather canalizing existing attitudes and behavior in one direction or the other. Thus, the seller of toothpaste does not have to socialize persons into new dental habits, (sell them on the idea of brushing their teeth) but rather into which brand of familiar and desired product to purchase. If the pre-existing attitudes are present (and in nutrition promotion they often are not), then promotion campaigns are more effective, since canalization is always an easier task than social reconditioning

The third condition, supplementation means the effort to follow up mass communication campaigns with face-to-face contacts. In many social advertising campaigns this aspect is left to natural social processes rather than planned as it is in traditional product marketing. This failure to follow through on the promotion leaves the response rate haphazard. Additionally, for some programs the target groups could conceivably be too large to ensure face-to-face reinforcement following a mass media nutrition campaign.

The social marketer is, therefore, faced with the problem of identifying and changing, if necessary, the underlying values that shape human needs and wants . However our basic underlying value system is not merely the result of the whims of marketers -- it has its roots in human nature and in cultural and economic environments. Additionally, the consumption process, particularly in today's society, is not clearly understood. In the past, it has related to scarcity of goods and was associated with hunger, with the bare necessities of life and with the struggle to obtain adequate food, shelter and clothing. Moreover, in the Western world, consuming activities occur in societies suffering from obesity and not hunger. The question then becomes: what happens to values and attitudes once people have suitably gratified their needs? For the social marketer this poses the problem of identifying these changed values and attitudes and determining how to meet the strange new needs and wants which arise from them.

Finally, social marketing programs are difficult to evaluate as the impact of social programs such "improved nutritional practices" often only appears after a long time has passed. Additionally, other variables may intervene and cloud the effects of the marketing program.

The Implications of Social Marketing for Nutrition Education in the 80's

The author believes that social causes such as "improved nutritional practices" could benefit from marketing-like thinking. "Improved nutrition" like other social causes such as pollution control, drug abuse, and physical fitness are in need of innovative solutions and approaches for gaining public attention and support. Marketing persons by their training are finely attuned to market needs, product or package development, pricing or channel issues and promotion techniques all of which are critical in the social area. Much of this knowledge can be adapted by the planners and implementers of social causes. A social marketing approach does not guarantee that the social objectives will be achieved or that the costs will be acceptable. Yet, for the programs like "improved nutritional practices" social marketing appears to offer a useful framework for effective social planning at a time when social issues have become more relevant and critical (Lavidge, 1967; Fox and Kotler, 1980).

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